DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

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TREASURY SECRETARY ROBERT RUBIN
JACKIE ROBINSON COIN EVENT

I want to welcome all of you to the Treasury Department for this special occasion. Let me extend a special greeting to the members of Congress who are with us today, as well as Mrs. Robinson and Betty Adams of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. I would also like to recognize Reginald Livingston, the recipient of a scholarship from the Foundation, as well as Jim Peed and Al Maletsky, two of the engravers who designed the coins.

Fifty years ago, America took a great stride forward in addressing our troubled history of race relations when Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier and joined the Brooklyn Dodgers. Jackie Robinson is a true American hero, not only to African Americans, but to all Americans, as a symbol of courage overcoming adversity, of talent overcoming prejudice, of determination overcoming hate --of one individual helping to make America live up to its promise of equal opportunity for all. After his career ended, Jackie Robinson continued to be a powerful voice for ending racial barriers so that each American can perform to the best of his or her ability, and be judged solely by those abilities. President Clinton recently announced a major initiative to heal divisions between the races. We can all look at Jackie Robinson as inspiration as we move forward on this critically important effort.

Let's not forget, Jackie Robinson was also one heckuva good ballplayer. He was one of the most dynamic, talented and exciting players to ever play the game. When Jackie Robinson was at bat you knew --and the opposing team knew --that something exciting was going to happen.

I worry that far too many Americans are not aware of Jackie Robinson's accomplishments --both on the field and off. To Americans of all races who were not alive at the time --and who admire such African American sports heroes as Michael Jordan, Ken Griffey, or Tiger Woods --it may seem incomprehensible that for much of our history African Americans could not play with white Americans. But that indeed was the case. Because of Jackie Robinson, it no longer is.

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I am pleased and honored that the Treasury Department joins the celebrations surrounding the fifty year anniversary of Jackie Robinson entering the major leagues with the release of these commemorative coins honoring Jackie Robinson and his accomplishments. The gold coin shows the face of Jackie Robinson in his later years on one side, and, on the other side, the years of his birth and death with the words "Legacy of Courage" set on a baseball. The silver coin shows a view of Jackie Robinson sliding into home during one of his famous steals of home. The reverse side contains a view of the 50th Anniversary logo of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, which has been worn as a patch by all major league baseball players this season.

The release of these commemorative coins will serve two main purposes. First, a portion of the proceeds received from the sale of these coins will go to the Jackie Robinson Foundation, helping them provide more scholarships to minority students. Second, we hope the coins will help increase awareness about Jackie Robinson's accomplishments so that the hope and courage that he represents will inspire a new generation.

First, I will present a set of the coins to Leonard Coleman, Chairman of the Board of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, and Betty Adams, President of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. Now, I will present the coins to Mrs. Robinson and ask her to say a few words.

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